

Pelton House
Name of Property

Stillwater Co., MT
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: Vernacular, Four Square

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: COBBLESTONE, CONCRETE, METAL

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Pelton House is a distinctive cobblestone American Foursquare house located on the West Rosebud Road, south of the small town of Fishtail in southcentral Montana. It lies within one mile of the Stillwater/Carbon county line. The house is set back from the road and situated near the edge of the riparian area of West Rosebud Creek. The Pelton House is an impressive two-story square cobblestone masonry building built in 1927-28. It illustrates the classic characteristics of an American Foursquare home and retains a high degree of integrity. It has a square plan, low pyramidal hipped roof with wide overhangs and a full-length front porch. The entire house displays cobblestones of varying sizes, shapes and hues. Built by a local contractor, most of the cobblestones were locally sourced at the site and skilled workmanship is visible throughout the building.

Narrative Description

The Pelton House is located on the West Rosebud Road, a sparsely populated county road south of Fishtail, Montana in southcentral Montana. Fishtail is a small rural agricultural community situated approximately 20 miles south of Columbus, the county seat of Stillwater County, and 60 miles southwest of Billings, the largest city in Montana.

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The Pelton House sits back from the West Rosebud Road to the east and is approached by a gravel drive. The house stands alone on the first terrace above West Rosebud Creek and near the edge of the riparian area to the east. A three-tier pole fence that runs east/west separates the yard from the drive, and concrete walkways approach both the front and rear entries. Landscaping is limited with some shrubs appearing along the fence and the south foundation. A lone spruce tree stands near the northwest corner of the house and further to the northwest stand a double row of mature spruce trees. An existing irrigation ditch once defined the edge of the front yard, but today no constructed features remain west of the house making it open to the road. Across the road to the west lie hay fields. To the south of the Pelton House are numerous agricultural outbuildings, both historic and modern.

Pelton House Description

The two-story cobblestone Pelton House features a square plan, low pyramidal hipped roof with extended eaves, and a full width front porch. It also has a full basement and attic space. The cobblestone masonry exhibits irregular courses of varying sizes, colors and stone shapes. The cobblestone walls measure at least 20 inches thick and lack insulation between the stones and the interior lathe and plaster.¹ Several individuals mentioned many of the cobblestones came from the basement during its excavation. Two wide concrete beltcourses wrap around the sides of the house to support the cobblestone masonry with a third smaller course directly below the eaves. The lower foundation beltcourse is approximately 22 inches ground level with the second beltcourse approximately 10 feet above the lowest course. Both beltcourses appear similar measuring approximately 8 ½ inches in height, and taking into the consideration the thickness of the walls, at least 20 inches wide.

The pyramidal hipped roof is covered with composite shingles. The east and west roof slopes hold identical hipped roof dormers, both with paired double-hung windows and clad with lapped siding. An interior brick chimney protrudes from the south roof slope. The roof displays wide overhanging enclosed eaves.

The majority of windows (except for daylight basement windows and a few one-by-one sliders) hold replacement three-over-one double-hung units similar to the historic windows and within the original plain casings. All windows have concrete lug sills and utilize the existing concrete beltcourse for lintels.

Exterior – Façade - West Wall

The Pelton House façade is symmetrical and retains its original appearance and character. A full width front porch covered by a low hipped roof displaying wide overhangs dominates the façade. Centered on the porch are broad concrete steps that access the porch. The bottom step measures 25 inches wide and has curved ends. The porch has a concrete floor, a beaded wood ceiling, and is finished with quarter-round molding at various junctures. The porch's closed railing is approximately 47 inches above ground level (or 23 inches from porch floor). The railing is

¹ Jeff Guckenberger, interview with Joan L. Brownell, Fishtail, MT, December 16, 2016; Tom Heyneman, interview with Joan L. Brownell, December 5, 2016, Fishtail, MT. The thickness of the walls is further demonstrated by the difference between the exterior wall and interior wall measurements resulting in a loss of 200 square feet, Mike Dailey, personal communication, November 14, 2016.

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topped with a concrete cap about twenty inches wide. Flared posts (painted white) are positioned on the rail with two on either side of the centered steps. The posts display a 14-inch square wood base and square capitals. A wide frieze board completes the porch.

The exterior cobblestone façade is symmetrical and holds a central entrance flanked on each side by paired windows. The entry holds a wood door (with an accompanying screen door) with a lower single panel and three divided upper lights accentuated by three dentils between the panel and the lights. The paired windows display three-over-one double-hung units with concrete lug sills and original plain casings. The previously mentioned concrete beltcourse above the windows serves as a lintel. The second story exhibits a centered small three-over-one double-hung window directly over the front door flanked by paired three-over-one double-hung windows.

Exterior – North wall

A massive cobblestone wall chimney dominates the north elevation where it stands slightly right (west) of center. The top of the chimney base (where the chimney stack begins) is balanced with two unique almost identical circular stones at either end. At the base of the chimney is a cast iron clean out door that reads “ADAMS 8 x 10 Dubuque Iowa.” A tapered concrete cap finishes the very tall chimney stack. On both sides of the chimney is a solid cast iron “Majestic” coal chute hinged door, which pierces the foundation wall. The foundation also holds a recessed one-by-one slider left (east) of the chimney.

On the first floor, two small double-hung windows flank the chimney on each side (these windows sit above interior built-in cabinets), and a single one-over-one double-hung window is situated near the east corner of the north wall. The second story fenestration features three window openings: two left (east) of the chimney, including a small closet window for natural light, and one window right (west) of the chimney. All window openings hold three-over-one double-hungs with concrete lug sills; a concrete beltcourse serves as a lintel.

Exterior – South wall

Fenestration on the south wall is asymmetrical with varying size windows at each level. The first floor holds a ribbon of three three-over-one units left (west) of center, and a one-by-one slider window (kitchen window) right (east) of center. The second story holds paired double-hung windows near the east corner and two single double-hung windows in the west half of the elevation. The south foundation wall holds three daylight basement windows across its length.

Exterior – East wall

A small enclosed hipped roof porch projects from the center of the east wall. The porch features cobblestone half-walls on the lower portion (with concrete facing on the interior walls). The upper portion of the porch features a ribbon of three removable four-light units fronted by screens on the east and north elevations, and a screen door entry and two removable four-light units on the south elevation. The removable window units allow use of the area as a summer porch. The porch has a beaded ceiling and concrete floor. A recently installed replacement modern door within the porch that leads into the house provides access to the basement stairs and stairs up to the kitchen.

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North (right) of the porch on the first floor is a one-by-one slider window. South of the porch is a larger one-by-one slider. The second story holds two double-hung windows plus a door entry that replaced an original window opening. The entry presently holds a modern door and opens onto a wood deck reached by exterior wood stairs.

Interior

The interior of the Pelton House retains a typical foursquare configuration of four rooms on each floor with a bath on the second floor. The house interior has experienced remodeling over the years, since the 1980s, but still retains original historic elements. The intact fireplace on the north wall is faced with polished cobblestones and displays a simple cornice. The original room division on the first floor has been altered slightly but interior partitions remain for the front rooms, as does the hardwood flooring. Original wood built-in cabinets flank the fireplace on the north wall.

All doors are solid five-panel wood units. A door opens onto the stairway featuring a half-landing plan to the upstairs (the attic stairway has the same plan). Along the south wall by the stairs are several built-in cabinets, and cabinets fill the entire east wall of the upper hall. A built-in laundry chute occurs in the hall. Basement stairs from the kitchen and rear door reach the partially finished basement. The large unfinished pantry reveals 2-inch x 10-inch floor joists on two-foot centers.

Integrity

The Pelton House retains an exceptional degree of integrity that strongly conveys its historic appearance and character. The Pelton House is in its original location, set back from the rural county road with the dense riparian vegetation of the West Rosebud behind the house. The setting remains basically unchanged except for the growth of evergreens, loss of apple orchards that were once planted toward the front of the house, flower gardens, and the introduction of newer walkways and fencing. A small one-story white house (where the Pelton family lived during the construction of their house) once sat immediately south of the house but has been relocated offsite. The agricultural unit to the south still contains numerous outbuildings and corrals. The Pelton House stands as a testament to the pride the Pelton family took in their ranch and no intrusive outside elements disturb its dignity.

It appears that the Pelton House design and plan took advantage of the readily available house designs and plans through companies like Sears, Roebuck and Company. The Pelton House is a classic American foursquare displaying many characteristics of this vernacular form, such as a low hipped roof with hipped dormers, full-width front porch, simple square plan, and wide overhanging eaves. Pattern book companies encouraged individuals to modify any designs to their own preferences. Obviously the Pelton's took advantage of this option with the cobblestone construction and the incorporation of some Craftsman style influences like the flared porch posts.

A door opening has replaced a single window on the east (rear) wall, accompanied by the construction of a wood deck and wood stairs. This modification affects integrity of design but as

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it occurs on the east (rear) wall, it is not intrusive and does not disturb the overall appearance of the house.

The cobblestones of the Pelton House remain in excellent condition, reflecting the superb workmanship of local contractor, Vern Garoutte. Mr. Garoutte was a skilled mason as well as an experienced builder. His expertise with cobblestone construction was exacting in its precision and craftsmanship.

Materials for the Pelton House, dominated by the cobblestone walls and concrete beltcourses that also serve as window sills, remain wonderfully intact after over 85 years. It appears some attempts have been made to repoint some mortar in spots with various materials not exactly compatible to the original mortar, but these spot-repairs are not overly intrusive or excessive. An effort made in the mid-1980s to increase energy efficiency resulted in the installation of replacement window units that retained the original three-over-one double-hung configuration. Around 2010, “traveling gypsies” replaced wood shingles with composite shingles but the low roof profile minimizes this new element.²

The house interior generally retains its original plan, though remodeling over the years has somewhat compromised some of the original historic features.

The Pelton House is still locally referred to as the “Pelton Place” despite not being owned by the Pelton family for almost 50 years. The House retains its historic association and feeling and the Pelton family members living in the area hold fond memories of growing up in the house on the West Rosebud. The Pelton House reflects its original historic appearance and character and is viewed by the locals as a southern Stillwater County landmark, exemplifying skilled craftsmanship.

² Heyneman interview; Guckenberger interview.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
1928-1966

Significant Dates
1928

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Vern Garoutte

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Pelton House is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion C. The Pelton House represents a unique American Foursquare House that displays all the distinctive characteristics of the popular early 20th century vernacular style. It stands as a fine local interpretation of a cobblestone foursquare home in a rural setting constructed by a skilled local craftsman, and displaying the personal preferences of Gladys and Charles Pelton. Completed in early 1928, the Pelton House strongly retains its historic appearance and character in its rural setting in southern Stillwater County, Montana.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Crow traditions tell of their people residing in the Montana-Wyoming area for generations including where the Pelton House now stands. The 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty designated much of this same area as Crow Territory but in 1868, the Crow lost millions of acres with the establishment of the Crow Indian Reservation. From 1875 to 1884, the second Crow Indian Agency operated on the West Rosebud a few miles south of present-day Absarokee and northeast a few miles from the Pelton House location. When the Absaroka Agency was abandoned in 1884 after the federal government relocated the Crow Agency further east, many white citizens came into the area, thinking the land would soon open for settlement. These early settlers became squatters since southern Stillwater County was not opened for settlement until October 15, 1892.³

Necessary government surveys further delayed settlers from obtaining formal land patents within the Stillwater region into the twentieth century. By 1900, the General Land Office completed its survey for T5S R18E where the Pelton House is located. The surveyor's field notes described "valley lands" that "are of considerable extent and rich soil and are occupied by a large number of resident settlers." Another survey in the adjacent township mentioned that trout "is abundant in West Rosebud." The survey maps show extensive settlement along the West Rosebud indicated by fence lines, residences, cultivated fields, roads and irrigation ditches.⁴

Stillwater County grew gradually during the first decade of the twentieth century. After the passage of the Enlarged Homestead Act, settlement increased more rapidly as the area experienced the homesteading boom from 1909 to 1918 like the rest of Montana. By 1918, the collapse of homesteading boom, due to drought and low farm prices, resulted in an economic

³ An 1890 agreement with the Crow, not ratified until 1892, reduced the Crow Reservation once again and established a new reservation boundary many miles further east of the West Rosebud.

⁴ United States Surveyor General, 1900 General Land Office map and survey notes for T5S R18E and T5S R17E, www.glo.org, Accessed October 28, 2016.

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depression into the 1920s. Charles Pelton surprisingly choose to move to Montana as the region fell into depression.

Charles and Gladys Pelton Family

Charles “Charley” Lyle Pelton was born in Dubois, Nebraska in December 1892 and Gladys Pelton was born in March 1893 in Pawnee City, Nebraska, both in Pawnee County in the southeastern part of Nebraska. Charles and Gladys married in March 1915 and their first child, George, was born in January 1917.⁵ It was after the birth of George that the Peltons moved to Montana. Two of his grandchildren, Kathleen Ostrum and Bill Pelton remember that Charles Pelton left Nebraska because he didn’t want to be a farmer.⁶

Charles Pelton, therefore, was not a homesteader who obtained his lands through federal land patents but a later arrival to Stillwater County in the second decade of the twentieth century. He is first listed in the Billings City directory in 1919, where he is identified as a rancher in the Fishtail area with 480 acres and an “assessed valuation” of \$32,150.⁷ The first recorded land transaction of Charles Pelton along the West Rosebud occurred in September 1917 when he purchased lands, including the Pelton House location, from Osmond O. Anderson.⁸ Charles Pelton continued to increase his acreage in the immediate vicinity, accumulating nearly 750 acres by 1920. The 1920 U.S. Census shows Charles, Gladys and son George living with George’s brother, Arthur and his family on the West Rosebud. Other Pelton family members like his father-in-law George W. Potts and his brother Arthur and wife Jane acquired lands to the south and north respectively of the Pelton property. Such family clustering was a common occurrence in land settlement in the West.⁹

According to the Beartooth Ranger District records, Charles Pelton first grazed sheep under a forest service permit on the West Stillwater Plateau Allotment in 1922, and held grazing permits on forest lands until the early 1950s. In the first half of the twentieth century, livestock grazing, both sheep and cattle, dominated agriculture in the upper Stillwater region. Sheepmen

⁵ United States Census, 1910, database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:ML4T-J14> : accessed 5 December 2016).

⁶ Ancestry.com; Bob Pelton, “The Pelton Family,” *Montana Free Press*, January 1996, 20-21; Kathleen Ostrum and Bill Pelton, interview with Joan L. Brownell, August 11, 2016, Fishtail, MT.

⁷ A cursory review of the other land assessments show Mr. Pelton to be one of the wealthier residents in Stillwater County. This suggests he came to Montana with some capital to invest in his new location. His brother Arthur, twelve years his senior, was a Bank President in Nebraska before he moved to Stillwater County around the same time. R. L. Polk & Company of Montana, *Directory of Billings and Red Lodge Yellowstone, Carbon, Stillwater and Big Horn Counties*, (Helena: R. L. Polk & Co., 1919).

⁸ Daniel McKay Sr. received a homestead patent for 160 acres in 1904 including the house location and passed it to his son, Dr. Daniel McKay Jr. in 1909. McKay’s house is shown on the T5S R18E survey near the same location as the Pelton House. Ole Eggen purchased the same in 1909 for \$4000 and two years later sold it to Anderson for the same amount; Deed Books, Clerk and Recorder’s Office, Stillwater County Courthouse, Columbus, MT (Book 3 page 384; Book 9 page 14; Book 6 page 340; Book 18 page 115, 181; Book 19 page 547).

⁹ The author can personally attest to this. Her husband’s family, who homesteaded west of Fishtail, included his grandfather and two sisters and his grandmother and her brother. Deed Books, Clerk and Recorder’s Office, Stillwater County Courthouse, Columbus, MT (Book 15 page 446; Book 17 pages 219, 445; Book 18 page 114).

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historically “grazed their sheep in the mountains in flocks of 1,000 to 1, 500 head during the summer.” In the fall, they moved the sheep down to spend the winter on grass and irrigated fields.¹⁰

Charles Pelton’s annual grazing permit applications provide a good indication of his ranching operation. In 1933, he held 920 acres with 200 irrigated and 720 for grazing. He raised hay and leased 1440 acres from adjoining neighbors. His livestock included 90 head of cattle, 15 horses and 1500 sheep. By the early 1940s he held over 5240 acres (having purchased additional lands north of the Yellowstone River) and had 40 head of cattle, 30 horses and 1300 sheep with 35 bucks. At one time, he served as president of the Stillwater Wool Growers Association and the Beartooth Stock Growers Association. In June 1950, he renamed his operation C. L. Pelton and Sons and began phasing out his sheep business, possibly a reaction to a decline in the sheep industry in Stillwater County at this time.¹¹

While Charles Pelton’s ranch operation expanded, so did his family. Charles and Gladys Pelton had five children: George Potts born in 1917 in Nebraska, Lois Marjorie born in 1921, Miriam Louise, born in 1923, Robert Lyle born in 1926, all born in Fishtail, and Marilyn Ruth born in 1933 in Columbus. All of the children attended the West Rosebud School, riding their horses back and forth every day (weather permitting) about a mile or so up the West Rosebud. All the girls’ weddings were held at the Pelton House.¹²

Charles and Gladys transferred ownership of the ranch to their son George Pelton who sold the property to Jack Heyneman of the Bench Ranch in 1966. The Bench Ranch “has been owned and operated by the Heyneman family since 1959, and since they set foot on the property, they developed a holistic philosophy and a mission to become stewards of this land. They follow a Holistic Resource Management (HRM) plan and also focus on conservation in order to preserve the raw beauty of the landscape for generations to come” The Bench Ranch management practices “provides a healthier ecosystem for the animals, the land, and the surrounding community.”¹³

Construction History

In the 1920 U.S. Census, Charles and Gladys Pelton and their son George lived with his brother Arthur, his wife Jane, and their two children along the West Rosebud. It is unclear if they built or just moved into the one-story white house that once stood directly south of the present house

¹⁰ Pelton Allotment Folders, 1930-1950, Beartooth Ranger District, Custer-Gallatin National Forest, Red Lodge, MT; United States Department of Agriculture, Department of Agronomy and Soils, “Soils of Stillwater County,” *Montana State College Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 529* (March 1957), 27.

¹¹ *Ibid*; *Billings Gazette*, “Charles Pelton,” January 9, 1979.

¹² Bob Pelton, “The Pelton Family,” *Montana Free Press*, January 1996, 20-21; *Stillwater County News*, “Weiler,” September 27, 2012; “Marilyn P. Holbert,” January 30, 1916.

¹³ The Torgrimson Place <http://torgrimsonplace.com>; accessed December 2, 2016.

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location. By 1927, Charles and Gladys had four children and family members recall that they lived in the white house during the construction of the new house.¹⁴

In September 15, 1927, the *Absarokee Enterprise* announced “Mr. Pelton intends building one of the most modern of farm residences the same to be two stories with a large basement.” Vern Garoutte began work on the building and by the end of October the work “is progressing nicely on the new residence which when finished it will be one of the finest and best in Stillwater County.” By November, the house “is enclosed and the second story plastered.”¹⁵

In February 1928 the Pelton family “are happily ensconced” in their new house. The *Absarokee Enterprise* exclaimed the house “is a fine cobblestone two-story structure with basement, and has all modern conveniences, such as electric lights and waterworks and a fine fireplace. It is an ideal country home.” Bill Pelton recalls that they installed a Delco Light Plant and wired the house right away.¹⁶

George Pelton hired Vern Garoutte of Absarokee to construct the Pelton House. Little information is known about Vern Garoutte except for the work he did in southern Stillwater County in the 1920s. The 1916 city directory lists him as a cement worker in Absarokee but by 1922, he is identified as a contractor. Recreational properties like the Beartooth Ranch on the Stillwater River above Nye, and the Branger Ranch resort on East Rosebud Lake, kept him busy erecting fireplaces, chimneys and cabins. When the Beartooth Ranch hired Garoutte to replace their tent cabins with log bungalows, the *Absarokee Enterprise* praised Garoutte, saying he “painstaking and thoroughly understands that class of work, and his charges are always reasonable.” He reportedly burned limestone at the old lime kiln above Nye to create mortar for the Beartooth Ranch cabins.¹⁷

While the Pelton House must have been one of Garoutte’s major accomplishments, he also constructed both public and private cobblestone buildings in southern Stillwater County. Beatrice Lesnick, who grew up outside of Fishtail, remembered he probably built the Fishtail “Rock School” around 1923 from rocks found on the hill behind the school. He also erected the cobblestone Nye School around 1930. In Absarokee he constructed the Cobblestone Garage in 1923, and presumably the Absarokee State Bank around 1919.¹⁸

¹⁴ 1920 Montana Census; Kathleen Ostrum and Bill Pelton interview; Ed Hamilton, interview with Joan Brownell, November 22, 2016. The white house remained next to the cobblestone house for many years and eventually was moved to another location along Fiddler Creek.

¹⁵ *The Absarokee Enterprise*, “Items of Local News,” September 15, 1927; October 27, 1927; November 10, 1927.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, February 16, 1928; Bill Pelton interview.

¹⁷ Ancestry.com U.S. City Directories (database on-line, Provo, Utah, <http://ancestry.com/> Accessed December 1, 2016; *Absarokee Enterprise*, May 17, 1923; April 9, 1925; May 28, 1925; April 8, 1926; June 3, 1926; April 9, 1925.

¹⁸ Beatrice Lesnick, “Fishtail Schools,” circa 1998, unpublished manuscript in possession of Rita Westrum, Fishtail, MT; Patty Hooker, *Moccasins, Mining & Montana 34th County*, 84, 118; Michael Koop, “Sandstone and Cobblestone Schools,” National Register of Historic Places nomination (listed January 15, 1987, NR #86002949); *Absarokee Enterprise*, May 17, 1923.

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Mr. Garoutte constructed the Pelton House from September 1927 to February 1928. Even before he completed the house, he advertised in the Absarokee newspaper about his ability to construct “all kinds of buildings.” In the winter of 1930, Vern took his family to Phoenix Arizona “to pry [sic] his trade as he figured carpenter and mason work will be scarce during winter months in Montana.” It is unknown how many more years he stayed in Montana but he did eventually leave and settled in Oregon.¹⁹ During his time in Montana, Mr. Garoutte’s construction efforts resulted in a lasting legacy of skilled craftsmanship in Stillwater County.

Vernacular Architecture: Foursquare House

The Pelton House is a classic vernacular American Foursquare home. Vernacular architecture can be defined as architecture of the common or more simply ordinary buildings for ordinary people and often borrows from different styles to suit an individual’s needs.²⁰ The American Foursquare emerged at the turn of the century and became one of the most popular styles or forms through the 1920s.²¹

The distinctive characteristics of the Foursquare House include a boxy, nearly cubist shape; two or two and one-half stories; a hipped or pyramidal roof, often with hipped roof dormers on one or more roof slopes; wide eaves; a full-width porch across the façade with wide stairs, and a central or side entry. Foursquare houses also often “incorporate” design styles from other architectural styles, like Colonial Revival and Craftsman.

During the early twentieth century, many considered the American Foursquare “the best blend of practicality, simplicity, and value in a home.”²²

The foursquare was an economical choice, providing the “greatest amount of space for the least amount of materials and labor.” Secondly, “the two-story form set on a high basement gives foursquare house a sense of solidity and massiveness without the complex rooflines and projections typical of the earlier Queen Anne style.” And thirdly, the foursquare “generously promoted by mail-order

¹⁹ *Absarokee Enterprise*, December 15, 2016; October 30, 1930.

²⁰ Thomas Carter and Elizabeth Collins Cromley, *Invitation to Vernacular Architecture* (Knoxville: the University of Tennessee Press, 2005).

²¹ There is some discussion on whether the foursquare is a style or type. One author dismisses the debate since the foursquare existed for a short period of time approximately from 1900 to the 1930s. Virginia and Lee McAlester in their *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990, 439-440) classify the foursquare as a subset of the Prairie Style originally created by Chicago architects led by Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan. The Prairie style expanded outside of Chicago and spread throughout the Mid-West, receiving further attention with the introduction of design and plans available through pattern books and catalogues like Sears and Roebuck. Other architectural historians describe the foursquare simply as a hipped cottage, defining it as a generic house type that is “substantial and dignified.” Herbert Gottfried and Jan Jennings, *American Vernacular Design 1970-1940*, (New York; Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1985), 194.

²² Roger L. Ciuffo, “Charles R. Palmer House,” Burlington, VT, National Register of Historic Places nomination, [listed August 30, 2005, NR #05000947]; <https://www.burlingtonvt.gov/sites/default/files/PZ/Historic/National-Register-PDFs/palmerhouse.nr.pdf> Accessed November 26, 2016.

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companies, magazines and other plan peddlers as uniquely American and perfectly suited to the American Family.”²³

Although undocumented, the design of the Foursquare Pelton House was presumably influenced by these mail order companies. Sears, Roebuck and Co. and many others provided designs, plans and complete houses for the individual. A review of Sears house plans from 1900 to 1930 show numerous variations of the Foursquare house. Owners using pattern books “were encouraged to make modifications and to express their individuality” and the Pelton house is an obvious example of this.²⁴

The Foursquare was popular both in urban neighborhoods or a rural setting and “were economical to build, comfortable to live in, and aesthetically pleasing in their simplicity.”²⁵ They utilized locally available natural materials in keeping with the desire to blend into the surrounding landscape.

Cobblestone construction in Stillwater County

One primary element of vernacular architecture is the utilization of locally available natural materials. The cobblestone construction of the Pelton House reflects this in the purest form. Cobblestone construction of the Pelton House is one of the most impressive examples of a wonderful regional tradition that existed in Stillwater County in the 1920s. The use of locally available materials, like stone and log, was a common practice during early land settlement in Montana and the West. The use of locally available materials extended beyond wood and readily available cobbles found on the ground surface or in subsurface deposits. Stillwater County actually became famous for its sandstone derived from a quarry north of Columbus; these blocks were quarried and used for buildings all over the state, including the Montana State Capital in Helena.

In the 1920s, dude ranching in Montana and elsewhere experienced a golden age for eastern tourists to enjoy the outdoors and western hospitality. Several dude ranches opened their doors to visitors in Stillwater County. True to the aesthetic of the area, many utilized a combination of locally accessible natural materials like stone and logs to construct their lodges and cabins in a western rustic architecture to blend with the natural surroundings. These dude ranches employed local craftsmen familiar with stone and log construction.

Cobblestones also became the preferred method of construction for southern Stillwater County schools in the early twentieth century. The earliest known cobblestone stone was the Limestone School constructed in 1912. The Absarokee High School in Absarokee was erected in 1921. Soon after, the Fishtail “Rock” School was constructed in 1923. The latest school built was the Nye School on the Stillwater River around 1930. The local community for each school, in

²³ Darlene Anderson and Scott Myers, “William F. and Julia Crome House,” Clinton, MO, National Register of Historic Places Nomination, [listed March 25, 1999, NR #99000380]; <https://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/99000380.pdf>; Accessed November 26, 2016.

²⁴ Sears Archives, “Historic Homes,” <http://www.searsarchives.com/homes/>, Accessed December 1, 2016.

²⁵ Antique Home, “American Foursquare,” <http://www.antiquehome.org/Architectural-Style/four-square.htm>, Accessed October 28, 2016.

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support of their local schools and to minimize costs, participated in the construction of these buildings by collecting the stones from the nearby creeks or hillsides.

Conclusion

The Pelton House represents the quintessential story of the American West, and its architectural traditions. The cobblestones for the house exhibit a wonderful array of shapes, sizes and colors with the smooth texture and rounded edges managing to soften the massive two-story building. The cobblestone house harmonizes with the surrounding riparian vegetation of West Rosebud Creek and the hillsides to the east. The Charles and Gladys Pelton constructed an enduring example of one of the major building tradition in the Great Plains - the Foursquare house. This house illustrates the functional and logical traditions of utilizing local natural materials for building construction, in this case the ubiquitous cobblestones left behind by the Pleistocene glaciers. The building was constructed in such a substantial manner that it has survived intact for almost 100 years, while many other farm residences of the same period have disappeared from the landscape.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 45.408170 Longitude: -109.524730
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

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Or
UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)
SE1/4 SE1/4 , Section 8, T5S, R18E

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
The boundary encompasses the footprint of the Pelton House

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Joan L. Brownell
organization: _____
street & number: _____
city or town: Fishtail state: MT zip code: 59028
e-mail _____
telephone: _____
date: _____

Owner

name/title: Bench Ranch
organization: _____
street & number: _____
city or town: Fishtail state: MT zip code: 59028
e-mail _____
telephone: _____

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Please see Continuation Sheets

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property:

City or Vicinity:

County:

State:

Photographer:

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of ____.

Please see Continuation Sheets

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

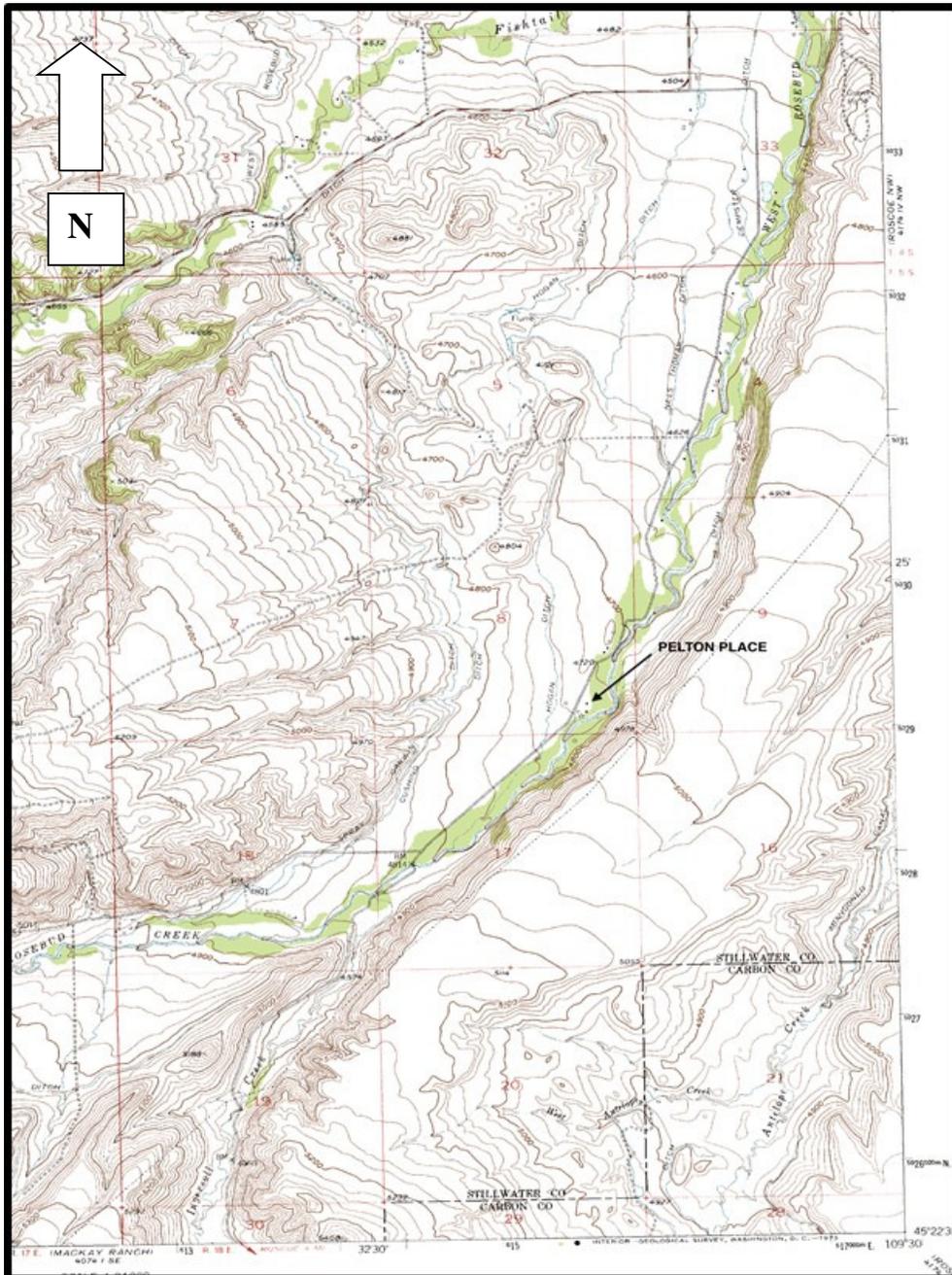
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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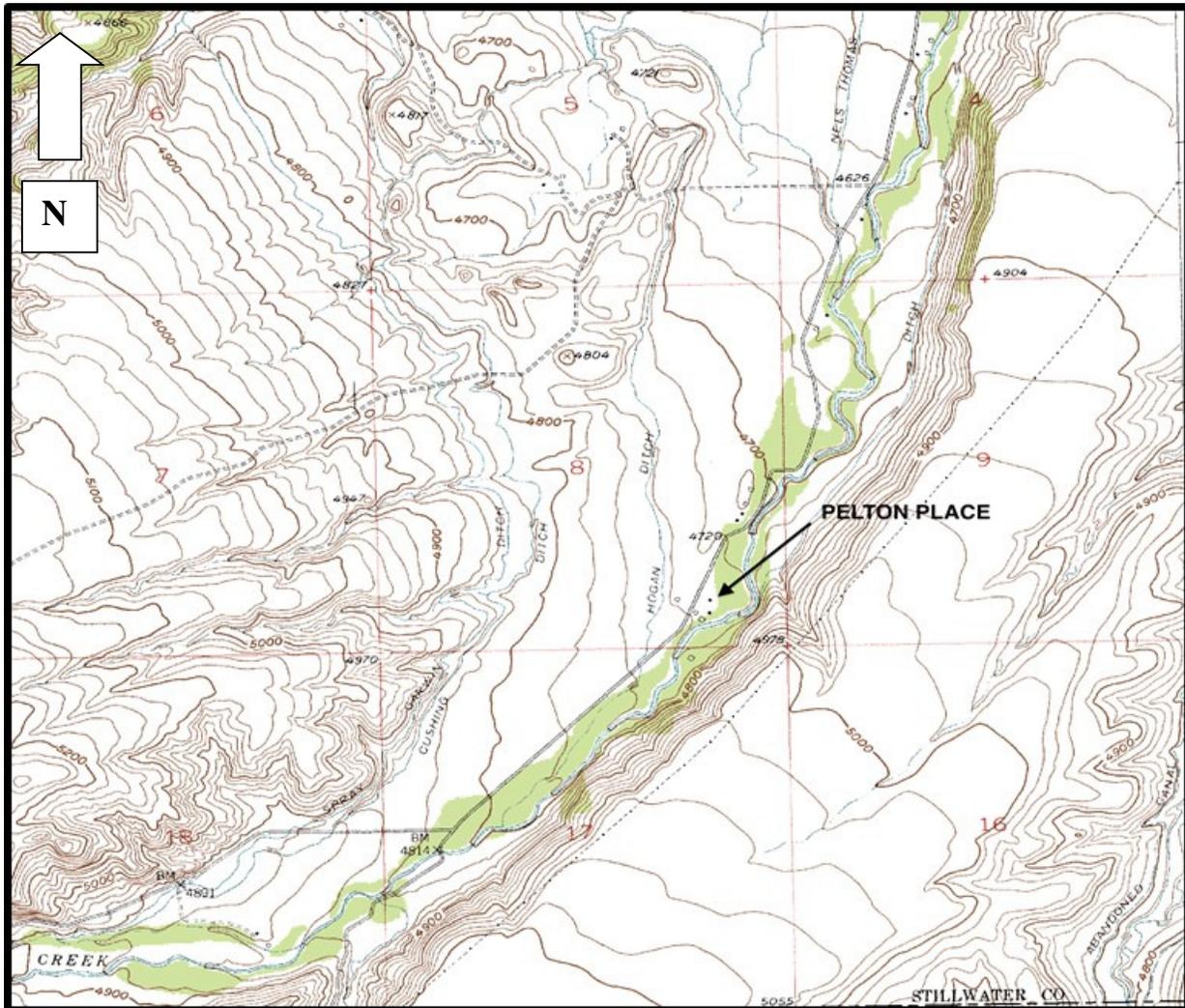
Location of Pelton House
Found on the Fishtail 7.5 Quadrangle map
T5S R18E SE1/4 SE1/4 of Section 8

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Close up of location of Pelton House
Found on the Fishtail 7.5 Quadrangle map
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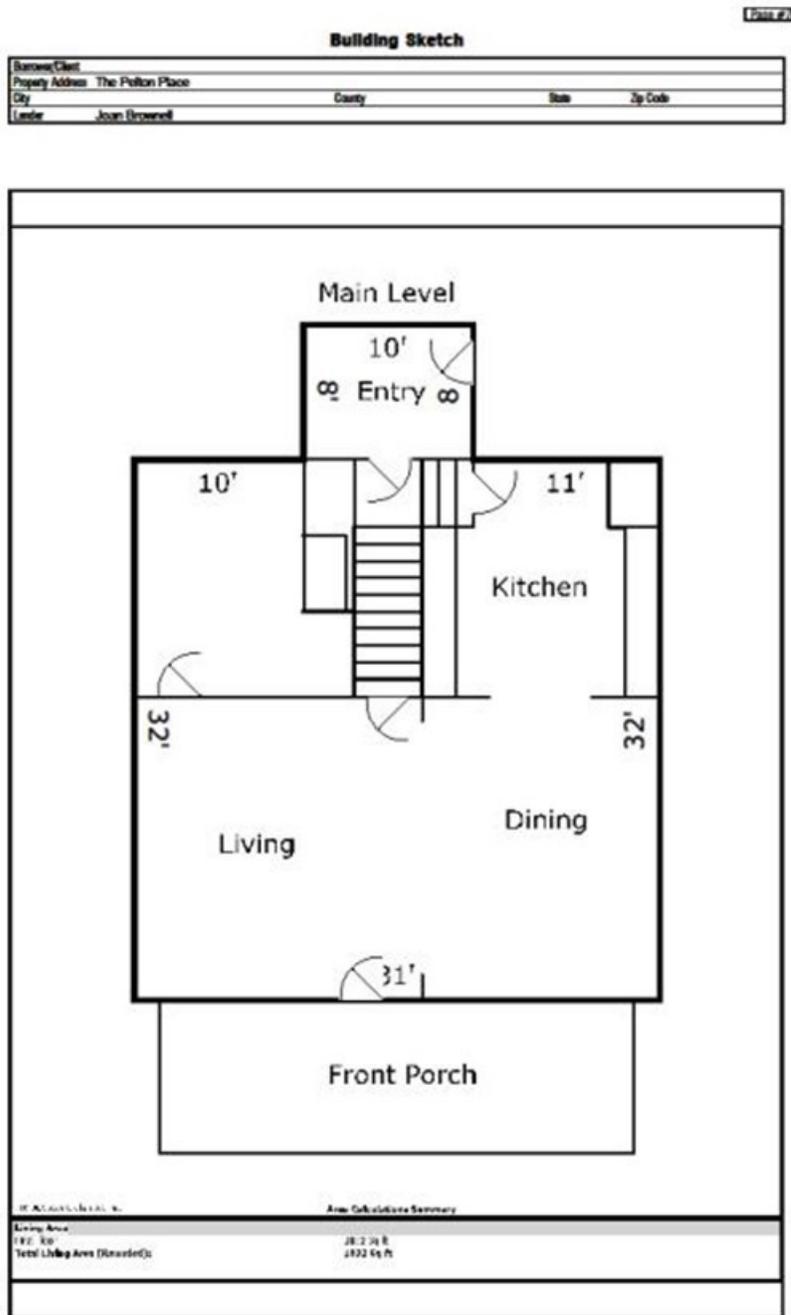
Aerial View of the Pelton House

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Building Sketch

Owner/Client				
Property Address The Pelton Place				
City	County	State	Zip Code	
Lender	Joan Brownell			

Upper Floor

Staircase

Deck

Bedroom

Bedroom

Hallway

Bath

Bedroom

Bedroom

31'

31'

32'

32'

31'

<small>Area Calculations Summary</small>	
Living Area	154.31 R
Unfinished Area	192.54 R
Total Living Area (Rounded)	346.85 R

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All Photos

National Register Photographs

Name:

The Pelton House

County and State

Stillwater County, Montana

Photographer

Joan L. Brownell

Date of Photograph

September-November 2016

Location of original negative/digital image

Montana State Historic Preservation Office.
Helena, MT



Description and view of camera:
Photograph:

South and West elevations, view to northeast
MT_StillwaterCounty_PeltonHouse_0001

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Description and view of camera:
Photograph:

West elevation (façade), view to east
MT_StillwaterCounty_PeltonHouse_0002

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Description and view of camera:
Photograph:

North and West elevation, view to southeast
MT_StillwaterCounty_PeltonHouse_0003

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Description and view of camera:
Photograph:

North and East elevations, view to southwest
MT_StillwaterCounty_PeltonHouse_0004

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Description and view of camera:
Photograph:

South and East elevation, view to northwest
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Description and view of camera: North elevation, view to south
Photograph: MT_StillwaterCounty_PeltonHouse_0006

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Description and view of camera: East elevation, view to west
Photograph: MT_StillwaterCounty_PeltonHouse_0007

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Description and view of camera: South elevation, view to north
Photograph: MT_StillwaterCounty_PeltonHouse_0008

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Description and view of camera:
Photograph:

View from West Rosebud Road, view northeast
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Description and view of camera:
Photograph:

Interior, fireplace, view to north
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Historic Photographs



South side of Pelton House, view to north, 1976

Photograph:

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Pelton House, view to east with white house on left in background, circa 1948 (courtesy of Ethel Pelton)
Photograph: MT_StillwaterCounty_PeltonHouse_0012

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Majorie Pelton and Jim Hamilton in front of Pelton House, circa 1938 (courtesy Ed Hamilton)
Photograph: MT_StillwaterCounty_PeltonHouse_0013

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Miriam "Min" Pelton in front of Pelton House, circa 1938
(courtesy Ed Hamilton)

Photograph:

MT_StillwaterCounty_PeltonHouse_0014

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Gladys and Charles Pelton, circa 1950
(courtesy Ed Hamilton)
Photograph

MT_StillwaterCounty_PeltonHouse_0015